



# NEWS

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## U.S. Department of the Interior

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Contact: Tanya Joshua, (202) 208-6008

### **Kempthorne Discusses Compact, Environmental, Economic Issues with Leaders of the Federated States of Micronesia**

POHNPEI, Federated States of Micronesia – Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne spent a full day with government leaders of this Western Pacific island nation, discussing challenges to the implementation of its Compact of Free Association with the United States, as well as environmental, historic preservation and economic development issues.

Kempthorne, whose department administers the U.S. financial assistance to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) under its Compact of Free Association, met with FSM President Emmanuel “Manny” Mori, Vice President Alik Alik, FSM National Congress Speaker Isaac Figir, Pohnpei State Governor Johnny David and other leaders.

The June 11 meetings were part of the Secretary’s official visit to U.S.-affiliated Pacific communities. Kempthorne and Mori discussed ongoing fiscal crises in the FSM states of Chuuk and Kosrae, pledging to work together to ensure that U.S. financial assistance is properly used to get those states back on a sound financial footing.

“Under the Compact of Free Association, the Department of the Interior provides the people of the Federated States of Micronesia with nearly \$100 million per year in financial assistance,” Kempthorne said. “The United States is fortunate to have the Federated States of Micronesia as a friend and ally. The Department is proud to provide financial assistance, which is used to fund the FSM’s health and education systems, build critical infrastructure, support environmental protection programs, promote private sector economic development and build public sector capacity.”

Kempthorne is accompanied on his visits by BJ Penn, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Environment; Donald Schregardus, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Environment; and David Cohen, Interior’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs. Cohen also serves as Chairman of the U.S.-FSM Joint Economic Management Committee, which allocates and oversees funding under the Compact of Free Association. In the FSM, Rear Admiral William French, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Marianas, joined the delegation.

On Pohnpei, the capitol of the Federated States of Micronesia, Kempthorne met with U.S. military veterans. The Secretary noted that residents of the FSM and other U.S.-affiliated island communities serve in the U.S. military at rates that far exceed the U.S. national average. He also personally congratulated Trisha Johnson and Eugene Amor, FSM students who were recently appointed to the United States Air Force Academy and the United States Naval Academy, respectively.

Kempthorne joined environmental leaders and historic preservation officials on a visit to Nan Madol, the most significant ancient ruins in all of Micronesia. The Nan Madol structures, about 1,000 years old, are what remain of a city built of basalt stones on 92 separate reef islets. The historic site covers 222 acres. Archeologists are still unsure how the builders of Nan Madol were able to transport the huge basalt stones from other parts of the island. In 1985, the Department of the Interior designated Nan Madol as a National Historic Landmark. Kempthorne also joined environmental leaders on a boat trip to view some of the FSM's marine protected areas off the coast of Pohnpei, which also receive funding through DOI's OIA Coral Reef Initiative.

In addition to the Federated States of Micronesia, Kempthorne will visit the Republic of the Marshall Islands, a freely associated state, and the U.S. territory of American Samoa. On this trip, he has already visited the Republic of Palau, a freely associated state, and the U.S. territories of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

As Secretary of the Interior, Kempthorne is responsible for generally administering the Federal Government's relationship with the U.S. territories and administering financial assistance to the freely associated states under the Compacts of Free Association.

The Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands were, prior to becoming sovereign nations, part of the U.S.-administered U.N. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. They negotiated to become independent nations with a unique relationship to the United States known as "free association". These three island nations are the only freely associated states who share this special relationship with the United States under a Compact.

Under this status, the United States is responsible for the defense of the freely associated states and can deny other foreign powers military access to the freely associated states and their waters. Citizens of the freely associated states may migrate to the United States without a visa and live and work there indefinitely. The United States also provides substantial financial assistance to the freely associated states and makes them eligible for several domestic programs. The terms of this unique status are spelled out in bilateral agreements known as Compacts of Free Association.

The FSM is an archipelagic nation, extending 1,800 miles from east to west across the Western Pacific. It has a population of about 110,000. The four island states that make up the federation and their capitals are Kolonia, Pohnpei; Moen, Chuuk; Colonia, Yap; and Tofol, Kosrae. These states were formerly known as the Caroline Islands. The

capitol of the FSM, at Palikir on Pohnpei, is 2,900 miles southwest of Honolulu and 1,000 miles southeast of Guam.

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